

-Legislative Hearing-

OPENING STATEMENT

February 5, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Gallego. And thank you to the witnesses for travelling to testify here today.

As you mentioned, the subcommittee will be receiving testimony today on four pieces of legislation.

The first bill, H.R. 4059, would place approximately 2,600 acres of land in near Palm Springs, California into trust for the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

In 2018, the tribe received the land through a land exchange with the Bureau of Land Management pursuant to a previous Act of Congress that established the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument.

The second bill, H.R. 4495, which I've cosponsored, would authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to purchase from willing sellers land that currently serves as an access road to the Desert Sage Youth Wellness Center.

It is my understanding that this road has historically been dirt and gravel. Once title to the access road is acquired, the Indian Health Service can make improvements, specifically pave the road, which will provide better and safer access to the facility.

Once the necessary improvements are made, the Indian Health Service would relinquish ownership to Riverside County for continued management of the road.

The Desert Sage Wellness Center serves Native youth as a residential treatment facility for substance abuse and co-occurring disorders through counseling, therapy, and traditional healing services. Ensuring safe, consistent access to the facility will help Desert Sage continue its commitment to provide the best possible care to the Native youth they serve.

Our third bill, H.R. 4888 would amend the Grand Ronde Reservation Act to reflect that the Grand Ronde's tribe's extinguishment of land claims, only pertains to an 84-acre parcel of land known as the Thompson Strip.

Under current law, the tribe is barred from bringing any claim against the United States within the state of Oregon due an Act of Congress that corrected Thompson strip survey error the Bureau of Land Management discovered in the late 1980's.

This bill would permit the tribe to bring any land claim so long as it is not the Thompson Strip parcel.

The final bill on our agenda today, H.R. 5153, sponsored by the Dean of the House, Don Young, would establish a program within the Department of the Interior that would provide contracts and grants to Indian tribes, Alaska Natives and tribal organizations to protect, conserve, and enhance populations of buffalo owned by Indian tribes or tribal organizations.

While Indian tribes, Alaska Natives and tribal organizations do have access to annual appropriations to further their mission of supporting buffalo and buffalo habitat, that funding is very limited, and the funding serves several purposes other than buffalo management.

This bill would dedicate \$14 million for the sole purpose of aiding in the restoration of our national mammal.

I want to again thank our witnesses for being here today and I am looking forward to hearing their testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.